

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 DHA-05 SSO-00 NSCE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5046
INFO AMENBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT POUCH
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PGOV, SY, US
SUBJECT: MEDIA PORTRAYS CARTER-KHADDAM TALKS IN POSITIVE LIGHT

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN MEDIA GENERALLY HIGHLIGHTED CARTER-KHADDAM TALKS AND OVERALL LED WITH UPBEAT ARTICLES CONCERNING TALKS. NO EDITORIALS HAVE APPEARED, YET, ON TALKS. BAATH AND TISHRIIN MADE NO SWEEPING CLAIMS FOR THE DISCUSSIONS BUT GAVE DEFINITE IMPRESSION THAT THEY WERE PLUS FOR ARAB SIDE. END SUMMARY.

2. BAATH SEPT 29 BANNERED: "KHADDAM MEES WITH CARTER AND CONFIRMS NECESSITY OF PLO PARTICIPATION IN GENEVA CONFERENCE. ISRAEL IS THE MAIN OBSTACLE BLOCKING THE CONVENING OF GENEVA."
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TISHRIIN HEADLINED: "KHADDAM BRIEFS PRESIDENT CARTER ON THE SYRIAN VIEWPOINT. INCREASE OF ISRAEL'S ISOLATION AND INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNATION OF ITS SETTLEMENT PROCEDURES." LONG LEAD ARTICLES FOLLOWED WHICH IN BAATH QUOTED EXTENSIVELY FROM FOREIGN NEW AGENCIES INCLUDING AFP AND VOA. BAATH STRESSED KHADDAM'S AFFIRMATION AFTER MEETING OF NECESSITY FOR PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA, AND IT REPORTED THAT HE

CHARACTERIZED TALKS AS "CONSTRUCTIVE AND BENEFICIAL."
BAATH ALSO INCLUDED KHADDAM'S REMARKS THAT HE CONSIDERED
THE EFFORTS OF THE US PRESIDENT AS A GREAT AND SERIOUS
CONTRIBUTION TO THE ISSUE OF PEACE IN THE ME AND HIS
AFFIRMATION THAT SYRIA WOULD PARTICIPATE IN GENEVA MEPC IF ITS
VIEWPOINT WAS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

3. TISHRIIN'S POLITICAL EDITOR WROTE REPORT WHICH CONTAINED
CONSIDERABLE ANALYSIS. HE CLAIMED THAT SYRIA CONDUCTING
INTENSIVE DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS IN WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK
AIMED AT ELIMINATING AMBIGUITY ON SOME OF THE PRIORITIES
IN ME CRISIS ON ONE HAND, AND BLUNTING ISRAELI DIPLOMATIC
MANEUVERS BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE UN ON THE OTHER. HE
DECLARED THAT POLITICAL OBSERVERS IN WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK
AFFIRMED THAT SYRIA'S VIEWPOINT INTERJECTED NEW FACTOR INTO
THE WIDE-SCALE DIPLOMATIC CGRSIS, BUT IT ALSO MADE
IT CLEAR THAT JUST SETTLEMENT HAS BASIC CONDITIONS WHICH ARE
NOT SUBJECT TO CONCESSION OR BARGAINING." OBSERVERS FURTHER
CLAIMED TO HAVE NOTED "THAT CARTER-KHADDAM TALKS RESULTED IN
CONFIRMING THE ARAB POSITION AND DEFINING EXTENT TO WHICH
CARTER CAN MOVE IN COMPREHENDING THIS POSITION AND IN-
CORPORATING IT AS PART OF MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE."

4. KHADDAM WAS SAID TO HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT ISRAEL'S REFUSAL
TO RECOGNIZE THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND TO WITHDRAW FROM
OCCUPIED TERRITORY WERE OBSTRUCTIONS TO NEGOTIATIONS.
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POWELL'S STATEMENT THAT CARTER WILL HOLD PRESS CON-
FERENCE TO DISCUSS ME INTERPRETED AS DEMONSTRATING PROMINENCE
AND IMPORANCE THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION ATTACHES TO THE
ME SITUATION AND ITS DESIRE TO ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT.

5. CARTER AND KHADDAM FURTHER REPORTED TO HAVE AGREED UPON
IMPORTANCE OF CONVENING GENEVA MEPC BEFORE YEAR-END. WHITE
HOUSE STATEMENT QUOTED, AS READ ON VOA, THAT BOTH AGREED
ON NECESSITY OF CONTINUING EFFORTS FOR FINDING SOLUTIONS
FOR BASIC ISSUES WHICH ARE STILL SUBJECT TO DISPUTE.
ARTICLE WENT ON TO NOTE THAT WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT REFERRED
TO DIFFERENCES IN SYRO-AMERICAN VIEWPOINTS AND THAT THE
WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN REFUSED TO COMMENT ON KHADDAM'S
DECLARATION THAT HIS VIEWPOINT WAS IDENTICAL WITH THAT OF
PRES. CARTER REGARDING POSSIBILITY OF FORMING UNIFIED ARAB
DELEGATION THAT INCLUDES THE PLO.

6. AFP WAS QUOTED TO EFFECT THAT OBSERVERS ARE SAYING THAT
AMERICAN SIDE STILL EXPRESSING GUARDED OPTIMISM OVER RESUMP-
TION OF GENEVA WITHIN THE NEXT THREE MONTHS. IT SAID
OBSERVERS IN THEIR ANALYSES DREW UPON FACT THAT TO DATE NONE
OF THE ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMAN CLOSED THE DOOR ON CHANCES

FOR RECONVENING
GENEVA MEPC. UN OBSERVERS WERE CITED AS
INTERPRETING GROMYKO'S SPEECH TO BE AN EXPRESSION OF
OPTIMISM SINCE IT REFERRED TO AN AMERICAN-SOVIET UNDERSTANDING.

7. THAWRA, UNLIKE OTHER DAILIES, CARRIED ONLY SMALL SQUIB
ON TALKS AND INSTEAD FOCUSED ON KHADDAM'S ACTIVITIES AT UN.

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8. COMMENT: WHETHER TO BOLSTER DOMESTIC CONFIDENCE IN
REGIME'S ABILITY TO MOVE US CLOSER TO ARAB POSITION OR TO
SHOW SYRIA REALLY VIEWED TALKS AS SUCCESSFUL, INESCAPABLE
CONCLUSION IS THAT PRESS INSTRUCTED TO PORTRAY TALKS OVERALL
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IN POSITIVE MANNER AND TO DEPICT KHADDAM AS HAVING MADE
PROGRESS IN WINNING US BACKING FOR ARAB POSITION ON ISSUES
OF UNIFIED DELEGATION AND INCLUSION OF PLO AT GENEVA WHILE
BLUNTING ISRAELI DIPLOMACY IN US.
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